

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

MINUTES

August 27, 2018

Present: Maria Alberto, Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Don Pote, Sondra Epstein, Joan Tak , Jim and Andy Stout

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

Special Guest: Watchung resident, Jim Schlenker, attended the Environmental Commission Meeting. Mr. Schlenker is a member of Adopt a Trail, a club at the Watchung Reservation that helps to maintain trails. One of the main tasks of the Adopt a Trail is to remove invasive plants. Mr. Schlenker attended the meeting to inform the Commission that there are a large number of hazardous vines growing on trees throughout Watchung. These vines will grow around the tree, strangle and eventually kill the tree. Also many areas of Watchung have invasive plants taking over the area growth. The vines and invasive plants are on both town and private property. Mr. Schlenker was hoping the commission could do something to remove the vines and invasive plants and get the public aware of the consequences of the invasive plants and vines. After discussion: Maria will ask Department of Public Works to cut the vines on the town property; in the spring 2019 newsletter the commission will submit a piece about invasive plants and vines. The commission will also put information about invasive plants and vines on the website. The commission will continue to discuss ways to inform the public on how invasive plants and certain vines kill existing vegetation.

Tree Reports attached. Mr. Schlenker suggested planting bushes in place of trees. This idea was vetoed by the commission

Planning Board

Sunoco Station on Circle: The Planning Board asked the owners of the Sunoco Station to close the eastern most entrance to help prevent drivers from exiting this way going the wrong way on the circle. The owners of the station attended the planning board meeting and explained they are not able to close the easterly most entrance/exit. This is the only entrance their trucks can enter from. The station owners did say they would put additional signs and markings to help prevent drivers from exiting this area and going the wrong way.

Short term rentals:

The Planning Board approved ordinance to prevent short term residential rentals in Watchung: Short term rentals 90 days or less. Due to recent rental issues, noise, parking etc., the ordinance was put in place to protect Watchung residents.

Non Condemnation Re-development Plan

Blocks 7402 lots 19.01, 19.02 and Block 7403 lots 5 & 10 are under review for Non Condemnation Re-development, also known as COAH. Marcia Shiffman of Maser Consulting completed a study of this area to determine if it met Non Condemnation Re-development criteria. Ms. Shiffman also explained for an area to be in need of redevelopment the area must meet one of eight criteria. Her study showed each lot met at least one of the criterias. There are some concerns about the lots, two main concerns Wet Lands and sewer availability. These concerns will be reviewed with the next phase of redevelopment. These lots were approved by the Planning Board for Non Condemnation Re-development.

Bottle Caps: Rachel brought in various samples and pictures of what the bottle caps are used for. It was decided to put the picture and plastic-ware samples above the bottle cap recycling bucket to show the public.

Review of Tree Ordinance for Proposed per tree Price Increase to the Tree Bank

August 2017 the Environmental Commission recommended an increase to the tree bank from \$200 to \$350. Council reviewed and had concerns: if the price of the tree bank is increased, would this have a negative impact so citizens would not submit a tree permit or not take proper care of trees planted. Rachel explained the increased price was to deter citizens from taking the option of payment to the tree bank in place of planting trees. Cost of trees is more expensive than payment to tree bank. Members provided tree prices. Sony also provided a summary of trees that have been taken down, replaced and money to the bank. Many of the tree issues and money to tree bank are handled by Arlene. Arlene will be asked to provide a summary of all trees removed, replaced and number that money went to tree bank for. After much discussion it was decided to change the price of what was originally requested. Payment to tree bank \$250 for 2 ½" and \$350 for 4" replacement. Maria will take this to the Council.

Next Meeting: September 24, 2018

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Pennett, Acting Recording Secretary

Tree Report July and August 2018

20 Fox Chase drive 6/28/2018, Remove 14 dead or diseased tree, 1 live: Replace 1 @4 ½ "

40 High Oaks Drive 7/9/2018, remove 8 dead or diseased trees

20 Jarod Court 7/9/2018 visited the property and needed more information 7/28/2018 Arleen and I met with owner and landscapers to discuss the removal of trees on the corner of the property effecting the neighbors and water runoff. Owner was co-operative in revising plan to cut less trees along the border of the property. Request to remove 18 trees. Replace 9; 8 @ 2 ½", 1@4" All of these trees were not in the corner of the lot .8/16/2018: new plan for the putting green. Putting green tree cut and replacement to be determined

293 Johnston Drive, 7/19/2018. New house was built on lot. The neighbor complained about the damage to the roots of several tree. The builder did not make tree wells to protect the base of the trees. He just pushed dirt up against them. 12 trees are missing 1- 8" 2 -10 "1-15"1-18"3-20"3-24"1-30 trees. The following 10 trees have been damaged during the construction process.1-4", 2-5", 1-6", 2-8"1-10", 1-12"1-15"1.30" 1 dead. Replace total 38 trees, 23 at 2 ½" @15@ 4 ".There are several engineer issues concerning this property

536 Valley Road, 7/19/2018 Remove 5 dead ash trees

25 High Oaks Drive 7/19/2018 Remove 9 dead oaks

15 Sunlit 7/19/2018, House to be demolished. Request to take 4 trees. Only two were marked with ribbons. All the trees on the property were marked with red paint. Permit was issued to take down two, which would allow equipment in to demolish house.8/7/2018 back to house, removed 1 diseased tree in back. 8/0/2018 back to house, cutting had started, stopped tree surgeons from cutting trees that were not in the permit. 8/18/2018 trees not marked, but want to take out 4 trees in front. There are about 5 large ash trees in the back of the lot.

25 Robin Glen Rd, 7/19/2018, 7 dead trees. Remove 7

425 Mountain Blvd 7/19/2018, second visit to house. Owner has decided to demolish house. Old permit issued covered trees near house. We have questions of drawings of trees in front. Pending issue.

460 Mountain Blvd. 7/19/2018, removed 18 trees, 16 dead or diseased, Replace 2 at 2 1/2"

68 Ellisen Road, 7/30/2018, Remove 6; Replace 3 @ 2 1/2 "

40 Sherwood, 7/30/2018 new home owner, heavily wooded lot, Remove 14; 5 dead, 9 live, 3 within house box, 6 live outside house box. Pay tree bank for 6 trees. \$1200

217 Valley Drive, 7/30/2018, 12 trees close to barn house, remove 10

86 Redmont, 7/30/2018, 7 dead or dying because of fragrant disregard of the trees. The property owners have destroyed 90 % + of the trees that were on this lot.

171 Knollwood Drive, 8/7/2018, 15 dead trees, suggested to cut and drop in woods

Mount Saint Mary Academy 7/8/2018, the wall that supports the field and track is deteriorating. It needs to be supported by a buttress. Remove 51 tree. (23 evergreens)
8/16/2018. We met with two representatives of Mount St Mary's. They said that the concert blocks were defective and it caused the deterioration of the wall. They have accepted a settlement from the company. Water is seeping between the wall and the track. This construction is only the first phase of the project to support the field.

73 Wildwood Terrace. 8/18/2018: remove 22 dead or diseased trees